

Top Secret



Central Intelligence Bulletin

State Department review completed

Top Secret

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30 October 1973

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Approved For Release 2004/07/08 : CIA-RDP79T00975A025500060001-2

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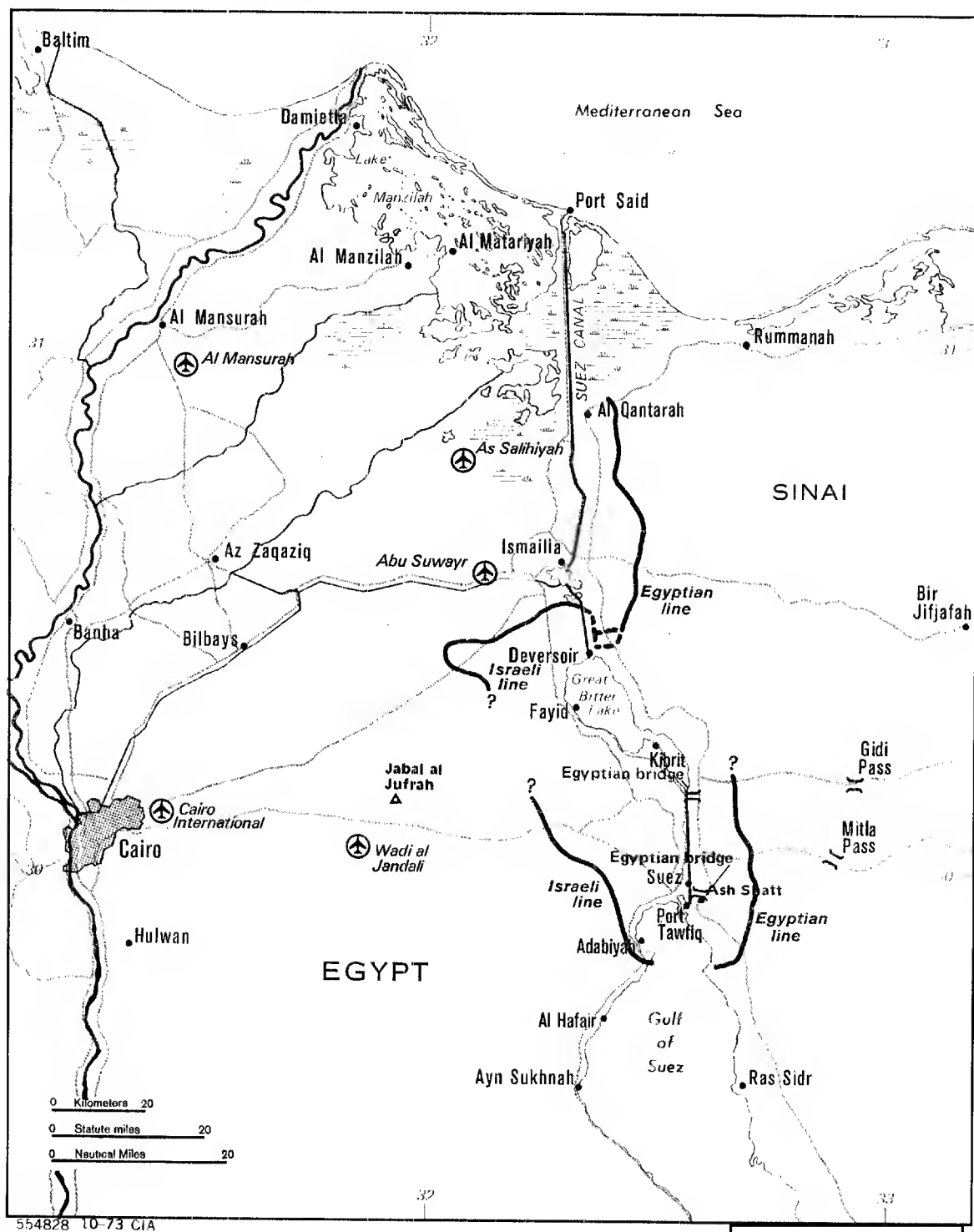
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Suez Canal Zone



ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Except for a few scattered exchanges near Suez city, which is still in Egyptian hands, both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts were relatively calm again yesterday.

The Israelis claim to have shot down two Egyptian helicopters over the Gulf of Suez as they attempted to reach the Third Army at dawn; a third helicopter apparently made it through. A UN convoy of 24 trucks passed through Israeli lines and reached besieged Egyptian units in Suez city at about mid-day. The Syrian front was quiet.

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Radio Jerusalem announced that Israeli and Egyptian officers would meet again today mainly to discuss an exchange of POWs. The public mood in Israel reportedly has begun to harden on the POW issue. The government has been stung by opposition critics in the Knesset who have accused it of giving in to US pressure to permit relief of the Egyptian Third Army while obtaining nothing in return. Several influential Israeli contacts have told US officials in Tel Aviv that the Israeli Government will not agree to anything else until the US persuades Cairo and Moscow to make some tangible concessions on the POWs. Tel Aviv also wants the alleged Arab blockade of the Straits of Bab el Mandeb at the southern tip of the Gulf of Suez lifted, according to these sources.

Syrian President Asad told his nation yesterday that the cease-fire had taken him by surprise, but that he had agreed to accept it after the Soviets and President Sadat gave him guarantees that Israel would withdraw completely from all occupied Arab territory. Asad acclaimed the cease-fire as a victory for the Arab side, but threatened to renew the fighting if Syria did not obtain its objectives by negotiations.

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The Syrian President made several oblique references to internal opposition, warning that a split in Syria's ranks would endanger the country's diplomatic and military gains.

At the UN, Secretary General Waldheim is running into difficulties assembling a 7,000-man international force. The 585 peacekeeping troops now in the Middle East have been drawn from the UN force on Cyprus and are being paid out of the Cyprus peacekeeping fund. Numerous states have offered troops, but most of them have been rejected either because they belong to the Warsaw Pact or NATO, or because they do not have diplomatic relations with Israel. Waldheim, therefore, will have to organize a force made up of a patchquilt of small states such as Panama, Finland, and Indonesia, which will be a time-consuming job. One important obstacle to funding the force was overcome last night when the Soviet Union agreed to help pay for the operation as long as it is kept under tight Security Council control.

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CYPRUS: The chief UN representative on Cyprus told the US Embassy he has received assurances from both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders that they will "freeze" the situation and make no attempt to create difficulties as a result of the drawdown of UN forces for the peacekeeping role in the Middle East.

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About 600 Austrian, Finnish, and Swedish troops from the 3,000-man UN force in Cyprus have already left for the Middle East war zone; Ireland has agreed in principle to transfer its 142 men. The UN force on Cyprus would then contain only troops from NATO countries, which would probably be unacceptable to President Makarios. The UN reportedly will deal with this problem by returning the neutral European contingents to Cyprus as soon as personnel are available to replace them in the crisis area. The UN apparently envisages using members of the Cyprus force in the Middle East for a limited period of perhaps one month.

The US Embassy agrees with the view expressed by representatives of both the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities that the situation on Cyprus should remain quiet. The embassy believes that neither side is likely to disturb the present delicate equilibrium.

General Grivas and his supporters still retain considerable trouble-making potential, but recent police successes against them have diminished the threat they pose to President Makarios.

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*CAMBODIA: Sihanouk is taking an increasingly gloomy line about his future political prospects.

In interviews with French journalists in Peking last week, the Prince implied that his relations with the Khmer Communist leaders--which ostensibly had been harmonious since his trip to Cambodia last March--have soured again. Sihanouk repeated that he could not return to Cambodia because of his differences with the Communists, whom he called "Stalinists." He also admitted that while his "united front" with the Communists is necessary for world opinion, it does not in fact exist.

Sihanouk repeated his earlier statement that all of the cabinet posts in his Peking-based "government" would soon be turned over to the leaders of the insurgency in Cambodia. He asserted that the initiative had been his and implied that the Communists have not yet agreed. He also made it clear that the cabinet proposal was designed to smoke out the insurgents regarding his own future as the ostensible head of the "government." Although Sihanouk did not state it explicitly, it is also possible that his offer to turn over the posts was to demonstrate to the insurgents that they had nothing to fear from negotiations.

Sihanouk's inability to move the Communists toward negotiations seems central to his pessimism about his own future political usefulness. Implying that he was willing to accept a compromise that returned him to power in Cambodia, Sihanouk stated that the Communists were "highly unlikely" to join a coalition government in Phnom Penh. In addition, he indicated that the Khmer Communists continue to believe that a military solution is possible in Cambodia. Sihanouk, for his part, claims that for

their own reasons, neither Peking nor Hanoi is willing to give the insurgents the necessary logistic support, and he stated flatly that an attack against Phnom Penh would fail. [REDACTED]

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**The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, agrees that there are many divergencies between Sihanouk and the Khmer insurgents, particularly over long-term policy goals, but INR finds no evidence that Sihanouk is urging the insurgents to negotiate.*

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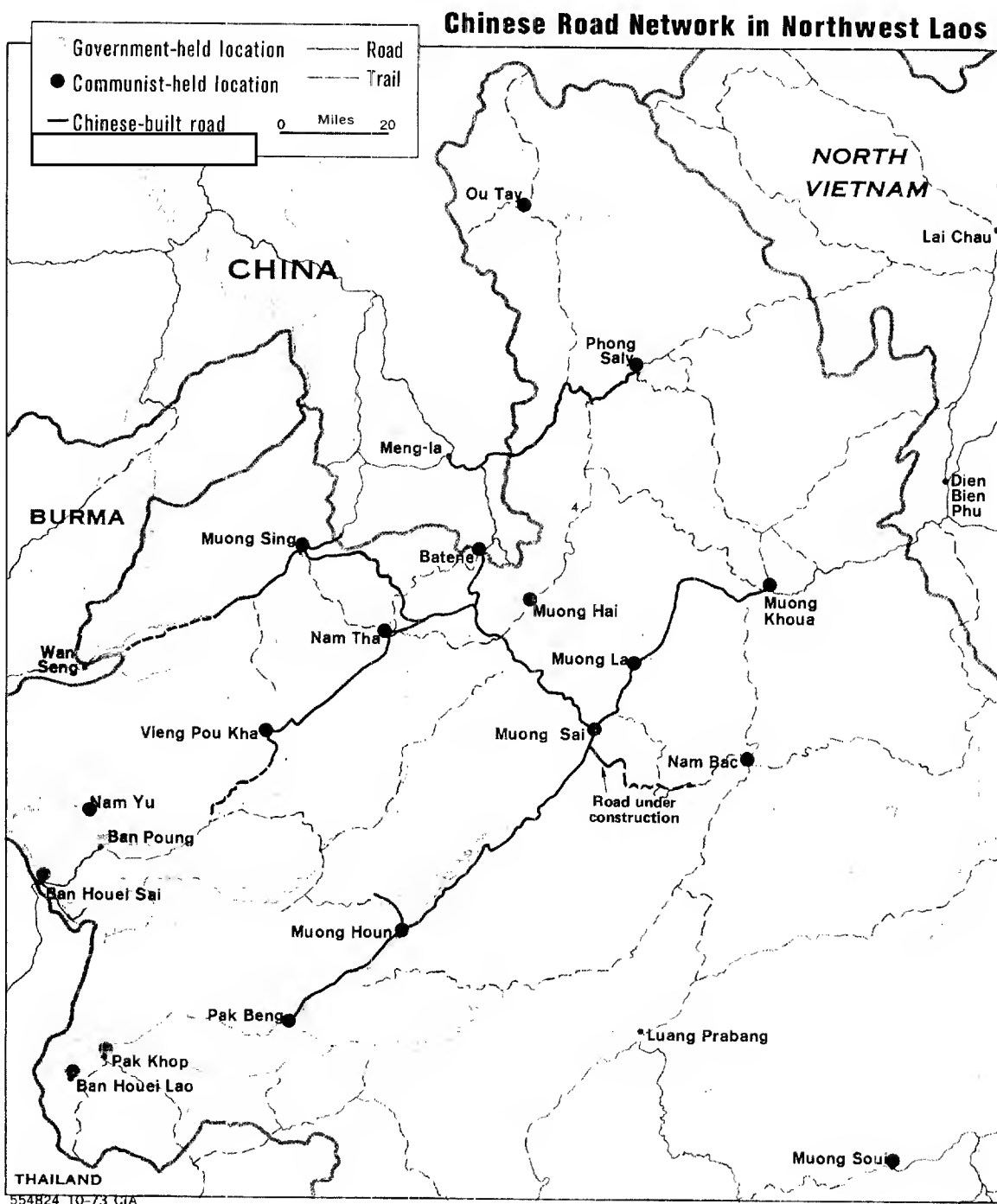
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SOUTH KOREA - UN: South Korea is considering an alternative strategy for handling the Korean question in the UN as a result of the close and uncertain vote now shaping up in the General Assembly.

Seoul's foreign minister has told the US ambassador that his government now believes it should try to make some behind-the-scenes arrangement to refer the question of Korean membership in the UN and the future of the UN Command to the Security Council. Such an arrangement would be intended to forestall the embarrassing possibility of General Assembly endorsement of the North Korean resolution that calls for an end to the Command and rejects Seoul's concept of dual Korean membership in the UN. Any assembly vote on the Command would only be a recommendation, because the issue can only be decided by the Security Council. Seoul's new plan would limit the General Assembly's action to terminating the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea, a measure which both sides support.

With the debate on the Korean issue scheduled to open in less than three weeks, Seoul recognizes that some high-level diplomacy will be necessary if any agreement to this arrangement is to be reached. The foreign minister expressed the hope that the US would explore the situation with the Chinese, who have been actively lobbying on Pyongyang's behalf. Peking on several occasions has mentioned the possibility of a compromise on the Korean issue, but the North Koreans have not. The Chinese, however, would not be likely to put any pressure on their North Korean ally to accept such a change.

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CHINA-LAOS: The Chinese are constructing a road in north-central Laos, following preliminary clearing earlier this year.

A single-lane, dirt road about eight miles long was observed [REDACTED] 25X1
Four additional miles of road-clearing were also seen. The new road runs from Route 46, four miles south of Muong Sai, toward the town of Nam Bac.

Construction of this road apparently had been planned as early as January 1972 when survey work was begun [REDACTED] 25X1

25X1 [REDACTED] Late last year, a construction camp was established about a half mile from Route 46. The Chinese have set up eighteen additional construction camps to support the new activity.

If the Chinese choose to maintain their road network, which now totals over 280 miles, they will have to keep a continuing Chinese presence in Laos. There is no indication that the road to Nam Bac represents the end of Chinese road construction activity. 25X1
[REDACTED]

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FOR THE RECORD*

Canada: Premier Bourassa's Liberal Party has won a landslide victory in the Quebec provincial elections. On the basis of almost complete returns, the Liberals have taken at least 91 of the 110 legislative seats, while the separatist Parti Quebecois won only four seats. Although the Parti Quebecois apparently achieved its goal of becoming the official opposition, the party's poor showing makes it a hollow victory. [REDACTED]

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Portugal: The Caetano government is interpreting the 71-percent turnout of eligible voters for the National Assembly election last Sunday as a vote of confidence in the face of the withdrawal of all opposition candidates. This provisional figure is 9 percent higher than the 1969 election when two opposition groups participated. Opposition groups withdrew in this election to protest official restrictions on campaigning, especially the ban on criticism of the government's African policy. [REDACTED]

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**These items were prepared by CIA without consultation with the Departments of State and Defense.*

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